

**Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)**  
**U.S. Department of Interior**  
**Bureau of Land Management**

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**OFFICE:** *Lower Sonoran Field Office (LSFO)*

**NEPA/TRACKING NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-AZ-P020-2013-0003-DNA

**CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:** *Buckeye Hills Water Catchment #1021 (Los Cientos)*

**PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE:** Buckeye Hills Water Catchment Renovation Project

**LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** T2S, R4W, Section 8, NW¼SW¼, Gila and Salt River Meridian, Arizona

**APPLICANT (if any):** *Joint effort between the Bureau of Land Management and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD)*

**A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures**

The BLM and the AGFD propose to renovate an existing wildlife water catchment located in the Buckeye Hills area east of Buckeye, Arizona (see Attachment 1: Map). The existing catchment contains three 2,150 gallon fiberglass tanks, a rock/masonry gabion and one drinker built as a cooperative effort by the BLM and AFGD in 1990. These tanks provide supplemental water to a variety of wildlife, but would primarily benefit desert bighorn sheep and mule deer. The current tanks have deteriorated to a point that they are unreliable and need replacing.

The proposed action includes removal of the three storage tanks and replacing them with one 6 feet deep by 16 feet in diameter fiberglass ring tank with a capacity of 9,000 gallons. The area of disturbance for the new tank will be the same as previously disturbed for the original tanks, approximately an 18 sq ft area. The disturbed soil surrounding the new tank placement will be smoothed out and a layer of gravel placed to stabilize the loose soil. In addition, a 24 foot by 24 foot metal frame and r-panel apron would be installed, and the existing drinker would be moved approximately 20 feet to the south and east (see Attachments 2 and 3: Schematic Drawings, Existing and Proposed). Installation of the apron would require 8 (10 inch diameter) holes to be dug for the posts. There are no motorized roads to the site with the nearest existing road over 1/3 mile away. The tank, apron and all other necessary equipment, materials and supplies will either be hauled in by helicopter or carried in by staff and volunteers using an existing non-motorized trail. Work will be completed using motorized and mechanical tools, including a generator, a welder, a pneumatic drill, an air compressor, a concrete mixer, a metal chop saw, a demolition hammer, and miscellaneous electric hand tools. The helicopter landing zone and any associated camping activities will be on Arizona Game and Fish property at Powers Butte.

The project site is located in Category 2 habitat for the Sonoran desert tortoise, listed as a candidate species by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2010. Mitigation measures have been incorporated for the species (see mitigation measures below). Prior to any surface disturbance

activities at the site, a biologist will search the area for any desert tortoises that might be present so that they may be avoided.

In addition, the Proposed Action includes monitoring and long-term maintenance activities (up to 20 years). These activities include inspections to ensure adequate water levels, assessment and repair of facility wear and damage, and performance of other minor maintenance activities. Maintenance activities would occur approximately three times per year; however, this maintenance schedule may fluctuate depending on weather conditions, volume of animal use, and unexpected damage to the catchments. Access to the catchment would be by helicopter or on foot using the hiking trail mentioned above.

#### Mitigation Measures:

1. A copy of these mitigation measures will be provided to all supervisors, crew chiefs etc. involved in the actual reconstruction phase of the project.
2. The AGFD will submit a project amendment to the LSFO for review and approval prior to any deviation from the approved action.
3. Renovations, including the metal frame and r-panel apron/tank cover, will use native materials and/or paint colors so as to blend with the surrounding terrain. Flat (lusterless) paint is to be used.
4. Off-road cross country motorized travel is not permitted.
5. All man-made materials brought into the area related to the proposed action will be removed upon completion on the action as proposed.
6. All reconstruction activities will be conducted in a manner that would minimize disturbance to existing vegetation and soils.
7. Renovations will be completed during the cooler winter months (October to April) when environmental stress to wildlife is less severe.
8. All surface disturbances will be reclaimed upon cessation of the proposed action to a point of being substantially unnoticeable with approval of the BLM Surface Protection Specialist. Reclamation should be completed within thirty (30) days following project completion.
9. Palo-verde, ironwood and saguaro cactus will not be disturbed.
10. All project participants will be notified as to the possible presence of desert tortoise. If encountered, it should be moved to safety by following the AGFD's "Guidelines for Handling Sonoran Desert Tortoises Encountered on Development Projects" which describe the procedures for handling desert tortoises and moving them out of harm's way (Attachment 4).
11. Any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the AGFD, or any person working on his behalf, on public or Federal land shall be immediately reported to the BLM authorized officer. The AGFD shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant or scientific values.

12. The AGFD is responsible for ensuring the safety of all participants and support personnel and providing for appropriate emergency attention.

### **B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

Land Use Plan (LUP) Name: The proposed action is in conformance with the Lower Sonoran Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (2012).

Date Approved/Amended: 9/12/2012

☒ The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

*WL-14: (Wildlife Waters): Provide wildlife with safe, usable, year-round access to water.*

*WL-14.1: Increase, improve or maintain the density and distribution of wildlife waters on public lands throughout the Planning Area to sustain and enhance wildlife populations across their range.*

*WL-14.1.1: Maintain and re-develop existing and develop additional wildlife waters in cooperation with AGFD. Increase the density and/or restore the distribution of wildlife waters throughout the Planning Area to sustain and enhance native wildlife populations across their range. All existing wildlife waters would be maintained or improved as needed to maintain the presence of perennial water for native wildlife.*

☐ The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

### **C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.**

Buckeye Hills wildlife water project, EA# AZ-027-90-35, Approved 11-23-90

### **D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria**

- 1. Is the proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the exiting NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?**

The proposed action is essentially similar to, and in the same project area of, the analysis as completed in EA# AZ-027-90-35

- 2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?**

Yes, the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing EA remain appropriate for the new proposed action.

- 3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, and updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?**

Yes. The existing analysis is valid in light of new information and changes in circumstances and it can be reasonably concluded that they will not substantially change the analysis. An updated cultural review was completed and there are no new findings. Standard mitigation procedures will be followed in the case of discovery during reconstruction activities. In addition, since the last EA was written, the Sonoran Pronghorn, lesser long-nosed bat, and the Arizona hedgehog cactus have been federally listed as endangered, and the Sonoran desert tortoise and the Tucson shovel-nosed snake have been listed as candidate species with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The project is not expected to affect any of these species. None of these species, except for the tortoise, are known to occur in the project area. The area is a Category 2 for the tortoise but mitigations have been identified to ensure there will be no harm to the tortoise or habitat. The area has also been classified by EPA as a non-attainment area for PM10 and 8 hour ozone air pollutants. The area is in extremely rocky terrain with gravelly soils, well drained soils and the project will have little surface disturbance. Mitigation measures are identified to ensure the project does not contribute to or exceed thresholds.

- 4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?**

Yes.

- 5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA documents(s) adequate for the current proposed action?**

Yes.

#### **E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b><u>Resource/Agency Represented</u></b>
Steve Bird	Wildlife Biologist	Lower Sonoran Field Office
Cheryl Blanchard	Archeologist	Lower Sonoran Field Office

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents

**CONCLUSION:**

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

/S/  
Steve Bird, Wildlife Biologist

/S/  
James Ingram, Assistant NEPA Coordinator

/S/  
Penny Foreman, Acting Field Manager

01-30-2013  
Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.